

Multiverse 217

Chapter 217: The Limits of a Shinigami

Among those present, which one wasn't a seasoned being who had lived for over a hundred years?

They were either Captains or Lieutenants—even Ichigo Kurosaki couldn't be considered truly slow—how could they not have noticed the undisguised superiority and contempt in Sōsuke Aizen's tone?

He gazed down at everyone equally, even Genryūsai Shigekuni Yamamoto, the strongest Shinigami of the past thousand years, seemed beneath his notice. Only Kaiser drew some of his attention—and, at that moment, the name he mentioned: Kisuke Urahara.

In other words, apart from those two, Sōsuke Aizen, through his attitude, told everyone else that he didn't consider them worth his notice.

How could they not respond with killing intent?

"Tell me, Aizen." Jūshirō Ukitake rarely wore such a cold expression as he addressed Sōsuke Aizen.

"What exactly have you done? And what are you planning to do?"

"Central 46—did you really kill them, just as Lieutenant Kotetsu claimed?" Shunsui Kyōraku pressed down on his straw hat and said, "You also staged a fake death and plotted the execution of Rukia Kuchiki. I'd really like to know what your reason was for doing all this."

"And you! Tōsen!" Sajin Komamura roared toward Kaname Tōsen, unable to contain himself. "Are you really with Aizen? Are you his accomplice?"

"So all these crimes—were you also involved in them?"

"What happened to your so-called justice? The beliefs you held to?"

"Is this what you call justice?"

"Answer me! Tōsen!"

Sajin Komamura's furious questioning echoed throughout the area, letting everyone hear the grief and indignation in his heart.

Unfortunately, Kaname Tōsen seemed to have turned into a puppet, standing silently behind Sōsuke Aizen along with the ever-smiling Gin Ichimaru, one to the left and one to the right, saying nothing at all, giving no indication they intended to respond.

"Hey!"

At this moment, Suì-Fēng no longer acted willfully. She came to Kaiser's side, looked at him with a solemn expression, and spoke seriously.

"You've known the truth about Aizen all along. You knew about the Central 46 being killed. That's why you said those words in the Captain's Meeting and attacked Kaiser at the Division 5 barracks, isn't it?"

Suì-Fēng stared directly at Kaiser, asking word by word.

"Now you can tell us—what exactly do you know?"

With that sentence, all eyes turned to Kaiser.

Even Sōsuke Aizen.

"I'd like to know too—just how much does Captain Kaiser understand about me?" Sōsuke Aizen said with apparent interest. "Back then, in the Division 5 barracks, you revealed many things I had done that were hidden from others."

"Now, I'd like to ask you—do you know why I did all of this?"

Sōsuke Aizen seemed genuinely curious—how much did Kaiser truly know about him?

To this, Kaiser naturally responded without reservation.

"As everyone knows, the four basic combat techniques of a Shinigami are Zan, Ken, Sō, and Ki."

Kaiser began calmly.

"Zanjutsu, Hakuda, Shunpo, and Kidō—these are the means by which Shinigami express their power. Though fundamental, they encompass all aspects of being a Shinigami."

"However, no matter which of these techniques you pursue, each has its limits."

"If you follow them step by step, sooner or later, a Shinigami will encounter these limits—and find themselves unable to grow further."

"This is the limit brought on by the soul's inherent strength. It is a wall of strength that every Shinigami must face."

"Once you hit that wall, it means your capabilities as a Shinigami have reached their endpoint."

This was something Kaiser had already experienced himself.

Setting aside Zanjutsu and Hakuda—he had never properly trained in the former, relying entirely on Authority to operate at full proficiency. The latter he never paid serious attention to, practicing it only occasionally to ensure he didn't have any major weaknesses—so of course he couldn't be said to have reached any extreme level there.

But in Shunpo and Kidō, Kaiser had indeed encountered the so-called wall of strength.

His mastery of Shunpo and Kidō had reached such a peak that for a long time, he had made no further progress.

That was the limit—the bottleneck caused by the soul's inherent strength.

"You always say I'm a genius, but in truth, when it comes to the power of a Shinigami, I'm far from having reached the end."

Kaiser wasn't being modest—he was simply stating the truth.

He had never trained in Zanjutsu, nor put effort into Hakuda. As for Shunpo and Kidō, while he had perfected them, the reason he was able to achieve such accomplishments in just a few decades wasn't because of exceptional talent—but because he already had a foundation laid.

Ordinary Shinigami draw their power from Reiatsu.

The stronger their Reiatsu, the stronger their overall abilities and combat prowess.

When Reiatsu reaches a certain level, even a casual slash can exceed the speed of sound, cut through steel, and when others attack them with sacred weapons, the overwhelming Reiatsu can prevent a single wound from being inflicted.

But excluding Reiatsu, the physical strength of Shinigami themselves wasn't particularly impressive.

In the original series, Rangiku Matsumoto once fought Izuru Kira—and this battle revealed that truth.

Izuru Kira's Zanpakutō, Wabisuke, had a unique ability.

It doubled the weight of whatever it cut. One strike made it twice as heavy. Two strikes doubled it again to four times. Three strikes made it eight times, and so on. The more strikes landed, the heavier the opponent's weapon became, until eventually they collapsed under the weight and were forced to bow their head—like an apology—left vulnerable to a final strike.

Relying on that ability, Kira landed several hits on Rangiku Matsumoto's Zanpakutō, increasing its weight to over one hundred kilograms.

And Rangiku Matsumoto—could no longer lift her own Zanpakutō.

From that, it was clear that as a Lieutenant-class Shinigami, her physical strength was quite average.

More than one hundred kilograms—Kaiser could casually lift such weight back when he was still a student at Seidoukan Academy, let alone now.

Other Shinigami were the same. Without using Shunpo, their running speed wasn't much higher than ordinary humans. If they didn't use spirit particles beneath their feet to create footholds, they couldn't jump very high. In terms of physical prowess, Shinigami weren't particularly extraordinary.

But Kaiser's physical strength was very high. In the world of High School DxD, he could already rival a top-tier devil in combat using only his body and some battle aura—and not just any top-tier devil, but a ten-winged one only a step below the Maou-class. To put it bluntly, by strength alone, he could go toe-to-toe with a Captain-class Shinigami.

Combined with overwhelming Reiatsu, Kaiser could defeat Captain-level Shinigami even without releasing his Zanpakutō. This had been proven time and again over the past several decades.

Precisely because of that physical strength, Kaiser had a natural advantage when learning high-speed techniques like Shunpo. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been the first among his peers to master it, nor would he have surpassed the "Flash Goddess" Yoruichi Shihōin in just a few decades.

Or rather, the reason his Shunpo was so fast was that his physical speed was also greatly enhanced by his strength, giving his techniques the potential to push beyond a Shinigami's limits.

The same was true for Kidō. In order to fully control his power, Kaiser had deliberately refined his skill in that area. His excellent Reiryoku control, combined with the immense Reiryoku converted by his second Authority, allowed him to master all kinds of Kidō techniques with ease—he had never encountered difficulty.

With these foundations in place, Kaiser was able to perfect Shunpo and Kidō—not through talent, but through conditions.

As for Zanpakutō—if not for his Authority, who knew how long it would have taken him to master Shikai and Bankai?

In summary, Kaiser never considered himself a true genius.

But Sōsuke Aizen was different.

"Sōsuke Aizen—ever since the moment he was born, he was destined to be extraordinary."

"Over a hundred years ago, when he was still the Lieutenant of Division 5, he had already elevated all his abilities to their limit."

"His Reiatsu was several times stronger than an ordinary Captain. He reached the soul's wall of strength early on and was no longer capable of growing."

"So, he began seeking ways to break through the limits of a Shinigami—to transcend the very concept of a Shinigami and reach a new realm."

"To that end, he conducted countless trials and experiments, ultimately creating a substance capable of making that possibility real by combining hundreds of souls that possessed Shinigami powers."

Kaiser's gaze focused on Sōsuke Aizen's chest.

His Authority flickered slightly, golden script appearing faintly, indicating that an extremely powerful item resided there.

"That substance... is called the Hōgyoku."

"It can Hollowfy Shinigami, granting them Hollow powers. It can also Shinigamify Hollows, granting them Shinigami powers."

"Shinigami and Hollows are two entirely opposite beings. If a balance—or even a fusion—between them could be achieved, it would be possible to break through the limits of either and reach a new height."

"That—is what Sōsuke Aizen seeks."

Kaiser's words caused the expressions of everyone present to change.

"Hollowfying Shinigami..."

"Shinigamifying Hollows..."

"This..."

The assembled Shinigami couldn't help but recall what had happened over a hundred years ago—the Visored incident, where several Captains and Lieutenants had nearly turned into Hollows during an experiment.

And decades ago, Kaiser's class at the academy had encountered a Hollow that could hide its Reiatsu—wasn't that also a mutated being with powers beyond that of a typical Hollow?

Even the mysterious disappearance of the former Division 10 Captain, Isshin Shiba, was later confirmed to involve a strange Hollow.

Could all of this have been the product of Sōsuke Aizen's attempts to surpass the limits of the Shinigami?